



### What is the Food Stamp Program?

The Food Stamp Program helps people with little or no income buy nutritious food. Food stamp benefits are not cash. They come on a plastic card that you use like a bank card to buy food. Most grocery stores take food stamp benefits.

### Can I get food stamp benefits?

To get food stamp benefits, your income and your other resources have to be under certain limits.

- **Income:** Your total income, before taxes or any other subtractions, is called *gross income*. However, the program allows certain subtractions, called *deductions*. These can be things like housing costs, child support, medical expenses (for elderly or disabled people), or child-care costs. The amount left over after these deductions is called *net income*.

Most households must meet both gross and net income limits. If your household has a person who is 60 or older or who is disabled, you only need to meet the net income limit. If everyone in your household receives SSI or TANF, you do not need to meet any of the income limits.

Look at the table below to find out what the gross and net income limits are for food stamp benefits. The numbers in this table are good from October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2005.

People in Household	Gross Monthly Income*	Net Monthly Income*
1	\$ 1,009	\$ 776
2	1,354	1,041
3	1,698	1,306
4	2,043	1,571
5	2,387	1,836
6	2,732	2,101
7	3,076	2,366

\*Amounts are higher in Alaska and Hawaii.

- **Resources:** Your resources are things like bank accounts. To qualify for food stamp benefits, your household may have up to \$2,000 in resources. If your household has a person who is aged 60 or older or who is disabled, you may have up to \$3,000 in resources.

Resources that don't count are your home, a vehicle used to carry a physically disabled member of your household, the fair market value of one vehicle (up to \$4,650), and the resources of people who receive TANF or SSI.

One way to see if you might be able to get food stamps is to go to [www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov](http://www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov) on the internet. Answer the questions. If it looks like you might be eligible, you can also find out how much you could receive. But to find out for sure, you must apply.

### How do I apply for food stamp benefits?

If you think you might be eligible for food stamp benefits and want to apply, you need to:

- Call or go to the local food stamp office for an application. You can ask them to mail you the application.
- Fill out the application as much as you can. Put your name and street address on the form and sign it.
- Return the application to the local office.
- Have an interview. You can do your interview over the phone. Or you can have a friend or relative go to the interview in your place.
- Show the local office papers like pay stubs, rent or mortgage payments, utility bills, child or elder care bills, and child support court orders and cancelled checks. Ask the local office what papers and other information you will need.

After reviewing your application, the local office worker will tell you if you qualify and how much you will receive.

### How do I find my local office?

If you need help finding your local food stamp office, call 1-800-221-5689. This Web page can also help you find your local office: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/coalition/map.htm>

### Do I need a social security number?

Yes, you must get a social security number if you want food stamp benefits. Not all people in the household have to join the program. People in the household who do not want food stamp benefits do not have to give their social security number. But they do have to give their financial information.



**Can I get food stamp benefits if I am not working?**

Yes, but if you are able to work, you must look for work, take a job, or go to training.

**Can legal non-citizens get food stamp benefits?**

Maybe. Ask your food stamp worker. Even if you can't get benefits, household members born in this country can. Getting food stamp benefits won't hurt you if you want to become a citizen.

**If I am eligible, how much can I get?**

Look at the table below to see the most you can get if you have no income. As your income goes up, your food stamp benefits go down. The numbers in this table are good from October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2005.

People in Household	Maximum Monthly Allotment*
1	\$ 149
2	274
3	393
4	499
5	592
6	711
7	786

*\*Amounts are higher in Alaska and Hawaii.*

**Where can I get more information?**

Call your local food stamp office.  
Or call 1-800-221-5689.

Or visit [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp)

**How do food stamp benefits help me eat healthier?**

Food stamp benefits help stretch your dollars at the grocery store so you and your family can eat a variety of healthy foods, such as grains (especially whole grains), fruits, and vegetables every day. Good foods can help you and your family stay healthy.

**Food Stamps Make America Stronger.**

**USDA** United States Department of Agriculture  
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